

REMARKS

Initially, in the Office Action dated September 25, 2003, the Examiner objects to claim 6 because of informalities. Claims 1, 4, 5, 7 and 10 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph. Claims 1, 4-7, 9 and 10 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 5,848,271 (Caruso et al.). Claims 2, 3 and 8 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Caruso et al. in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,334,133 (Thompson et al.).

By the present response, Applicants have amended claims 1-8 and 10 to further clarify the invention. Claims 1-10 remain pending in the present application.

Claim Objections

Claim 6 has been objected to because of informalities. Applicants have amended this claim to further clarify the invention and respectfully request that this objection be withdrawn.

35 U.S.C. §112 Rejections

Claims 1, 4, 5, 7 and 10 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph. Applicants have amended these claims to further clarify the invention and respectfully request that these rejections be withdrawn.

35 U.S.C. §102 Rejections

Claims 1, 4-7, 9 and 10 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) as being anticipated by Caruso et al. Applicants respectfully traverse these rejections.

Caruso et al. discloses computerized information flow technology where information in an organization may be logically and automatically routed through a predefined sequence of activities to users who need the information. A user selects an activity from a list of available activities revealed by the computer system. Upon the user completing the activity, the computer system selects an event associated with the activity and the event then performs a decision making process to determine which next steps are to be logically selected based upon predefined conditions in the computer system and the information input by the user. The next steps determine the subsequent user or users responsible for performing a next activity (task) in the predefined sequence of activities.

Regarding claims 1, 9 and 10, Applicants submit that Caruso et al. does not disclose or suggest the limitations in the combination of each of these claims of, inter alia, a user management table inked to management information of each of the users of the client terminals, for indicating a list of work items transferred to the user and information regarding a substitute user designated by the user in charge in association with each node operation, a controller for allowing according to the user management table, with respect to at least one work item, both a user in charge to whom the work item is transferred and a substitute user predesignated by the user in charge to access the work item, and directly or indirectly transferring the work item processed by either user to the next user in charge according to the process management table, where the substitute user specifies the user in charge to access the work item, requesting from one of the client terminals to the workflow server to

display a work item to be performed by a substitute user by specifying a user in charge who designated the substitute user to process a work item, or selecting by the workflow server an unprocessed work item which can be processed by a user of a request source client terminal as the substitute user among unprocessed work items of the user in charge. The Examiner asserts that these limitations in the claims of the present application are disclosed in Caruso et al. in Fig. 16H, col. 11, lines 34-48, col. 13, line 18, and col. 15, lines 24-32. The Examiner further states that in Caruso et al., any member of a group can access the task that he/she is qualified for. Since in Caruso et al. a work item transferred to a "a role or a group of user" is allowed to be treated by any user who belongs to the group, the "group of users" does not disclose or suggest the pair of users recited in the claims of the present application, i.e., a user in charge and a substitute user. The cited portions of Caruso et al. merely disclose a computer screen displaying a To Do List conveying a plurality of next activity categories, a description of Fig. 6 showing what a next step may include, that a next activity/task category is added to another user's or work group's To Do List, and that a stored procedure accesses a user security table to determine which user specific activities the user has security privileges. These portions are not a user management table for indicating a list of work items transferred to the user and information regarding a substitute user designated by the user in charge, a controller for allowing both the user in charge to whom the work item is transferred and a substitute user predesignated by the user in charge to access the work item and directly or indirectly transferring the work item processed

by either user to the next user in charge according to the process management table where the substitute user specifies the user in charge to accesses to the work item, requesting to display a work item to be performed by a substitute user by specifying a user in charge who designated the substitute user to process a work item, or selecting an unprocessed work item which can be processed by a user as the substitute user among unprocessed work items of the user in charge. Caruso et al. does not disclose or suggest a relationship between a user in charge and a substitute user. Caruso et al. further fails to disclose or suggest a user management table and the function of the controller, as recited in the claims of the present application. According to the present invention, a user management table indicates, in association with management information of each of the users, a list of work items and information regarding a substitute user, so that a controller can allow the substitute user, as well as the user in charge, to access a work item selected from the list of work items transferred to the user in charge. These limitations are neither disclosed nor suggested by Caruso et al.

Regarding claims 4-7, Applicants submit that these claims are dependent on independent claim 1 and, therefore, are patentable over the cited references at least for the same reasons noted regarding this independent claim. For example, Caruso et al. does not disclose or suggest a user management table that includes identification information of a substitute user designated for each process by the user in charge in association with identification information of each of the users of the client terminals.

Accordingly, Applicants submit that Caruso et al. does not disclose or suggest the limitations in the combination of each of claims 1, 4-7, 9 and 10 of the present application. Applicants respectfully request that these rejections be withdrawn and that these claims be allowed.

35 U.S.C. §103 Rejections

Claims 2 and 3 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Caruso et al. in view of Thompson et al. Applicants respectfully traverse these rejections.

Thompson et al. discloses automating the performance of a substitute fulfillment to assign a replacement worker to substitute for a worker during a temporary access. Substitute fulfillment data is stored centrally in a database on a server at a common site for multiple organizations employing the substitute fulfillment system. When a worker absence is indicated, the system searches the database to obtain a list of potential replacements for the absent worker and contacts potential replacements until one is found or the list is exhausted.

Applicants submit that claims 2 and 3 are dependent on independent claim 1 and, therefore, are patentable at least for the same reasons noted regarding this independent claim. Applicants submit that Thompson et al. does not overcome the substantial defects noted previously regarding Caruso et al. For example, none of the cited references disclose or suggest displaying a list of users who are designating the user of the requesting client terminal as a substitute on the client

terminal where the substitute user specifies a user in charge by referring to a list of users.

Accordingly, Applicants submit that none of the cited references, taken alone or in any proper combination, disclose, suggest or render obvious the limitations in the combination of each of claims 2 and 3 of the present application. Applicants respectfully request that these rejections be withdrawn and that these claims be allowed.

Claim 8 has been rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Caruso et al. Applicants submit that claim 8 is dependent on independent claim 1 and, therefore, is patentable over the cited references at least for the same reasons noted previously regarding this independent claim. For example, Caruso et al. does not disclose or suggest means for transmitting a message for reminding the process of the work item to be urgently processed to at least one of the client terminal operated by the user in charge as destination of the work item and a client terminal operated by the substitute user designated as a substitute of the work item.

Accordingly, Applicants submit that Caruso et al. does not disclose or suggest the limitations in the combination of claim 8 of the present application. Applicants respectfully request that this rejection be withdrawn and that this claim be allowed.

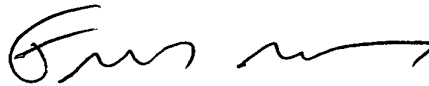
In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, Applicants submit that claims 1-10 are now in condition for allowance. Accordingly, early allowance of such claims is respectfully requested.

U.S. Application No. 09/514,945

To the extent necessary, Applicants petition for an extension of time under 37 CFR 1.136. Please charge any shortage in fees due in connection with the filing of this paper, including extension of time fees, or credit any overpayment of fees, to the deposit account of Antonelli, Terry, Stout & Kraus, LLP, Deposit Account No. 01-2135 (referencing attorney docket no. 520.38267X00).

Respectfully submitted,

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